

## [Superstitions]

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Folk Tales - Superstitions

Ruby Mosley

San Angelo Interview

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### FOLK TALES - SUPERSTITIONS

"My father, Billy Scott was born in Joplin, Missouri, where he lived most of his life," states Mrs. Eldora Scott Maples, San Angelo, Texas.

"When my father was twelve years of age he heard a strange tap, tap one night as he lay in bed that sounded as if water was dripping from the top of the house down to a feather mattress. The tap, tap come repeatedly through a duration of a year or more before he recognized that some message was trying to be revealed. The tap, tap, tap, appeared so frequently that they soon ceased to be taps but were an insistent stream, then stopped when the usual tap, tap, tap, began as before. While in that lone room in the stillness of the night with blared eyes the constant tap, tap, never varying from sound except by frequency, my father decided C 12 - 2/11/41 - Tex. [Box 1?] 2 that the visitor was a ghost. Many times the entire family searched for the ghastly specter but it was never physically located even though one could hear the sound. One time grandmother Scott said, 'Billy some one's spirit has come to watch over you,' It did al / through the remaining years. My father had tried every way plausible to locate come physical phase of the tapper, although his efforts were in vain. One lonely, quiet night he was listening to the insistent tapping

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when he decided to talk to his spiritual companion, the question came up as to how he might receive an answer. Finally the two decided to work out a code as: two taps for yes, and one tap for no. Thus the conversation began. Of course father wanted to know who the tapper was and if he was either of his favorite generals, Hannabal or Napoleon; the answer came with one tap which meant no. He asked about several other celebrities and found the tapper to be Alexander The Great, therefore he was and is until this day, called Alex by the Scott generation. He is known by the entire family and is recognized by advice at intervals, which proves helpful in many instances.

"My father was almost a genius in regard to Latin, Greek and French languages; also a lover of history, therefore he had an understanding of theosophy that would be meaningless to the ordinary person.

"I will relate several of Alex's theurgies which saved my father's life several times. Alex reported the death of my mother's first born; a son's life saved when a war ship was blown up. I 3 could name minor incidents reported by Alex that would fill a book.

"Father, just an ordinary boy at 17 years of age, went over to a boy friend's to play a little game of poker, lost his money and started home. The vicinity of Joplin was sparsely populated and the wooded section made a very desirable place for a rif-raft of robbers to harbor as there was money in 'them there hills', of the new mining town, as it is today in the oil boom towns. Father was a little shaky as he had to cross a little ravine. The paths were connected by a foot log crossing the stream, a big tree spread her branches in every direction, one going directly over the path. When father came near the tree he was frightened out of his wits by hand clutches on his trembling shoulders. He wheeled around to recognize his assailant when he found himself alone. He grabbed a stick and searched the underbrush on either side of the path for his assailant but found no one. He gave up with disgust and turned homeward. As he got back to the big tree he discovered a huge panther sitting on the limb of the tree that extended over the trail. He retraced his tracks, whistled to his boy friends, they brought the dogs and gave chase but the panther

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disappeared. Father went home and stretched out for a good night's sleep, when the tap, tap, met his ears. He asked Alex if he had saved him from the panther and his answer was two taps, which meant yes. Alex vanished and didn't bother any more that night. In case father didn't recognize Alex's presence, he was gently touched on the shoulder or an arm. 4 "One night Alex was tapping and father was so tired and sleepy he said, 'Go away Alex, I'm too tired to talk with you to night,' Alex continued the tap, tap indefinitely until he became so tiresome that father said, 'Get out of here, you damned son-o-a-b.' At these words father was struck on the head by a magic blow of a streak of blind lightning which left him unconscious for hours. The next morning he was so weak that he could hardly get out of the bed of cold sweat. His headache lasted several days and he never refused to recognize Alex [Again?]. Alex was silent for several months. Father would call on him and pray that he would return and he did.

"Alex saved father again, when working in a lead and zinc mine at Joplin. Father's ears were trained to catch Alex's taps instantly, as they were unexpected warnings which were often urgent. On this occasion they struck an especially rich vein of lead and zinc. The miners were enthusiastically working to obtain as much ore as possible. Father heard a tap, tap, on his shovel handle and felt the light brush of a magic hand on his shoulder. He felt Alex's presence, looked up in time to see thousands of tons of dirt caving in when he shouted, 'My God, men, get out of the way!' They all dashed down the tunnel where they were saved again. Alex came tapping that night and father thanked him for his warning. The shaft of a mine was dug straight down as a well or cellar, then the vein of zinc or lead was traced and its course was followed as far as the wealth was obtainable. The whole set-up was similar to a large house with a hall-way 5 leading to each room. My father and his partner were 40 feet below the surface, digging zinc. One that far under the ground never knew what was happening on top. The railroads in the mine were always graveled which caused a grinding sound when walked upon. My father and his partner heard footsteps come to the turn and stop. His co-worker said, 'I heard someone coming, Billy.' Then dad answered, 'I thought I heard someone too.' They walked around the

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bend and saw no one. When they resumed their work, footsteps were heard again. They knew that they could see any one that entered the mine, from the place they worked. The footsteps were heard for the third time and dad felt the light brush of someone's hand on his shoulder. 'Let's get out of here! Something must be wrong,' cried dad. 'I'm coming, I won't stay where hants walk,' replied the partner. They rushed out to the drift in the shaft and before they arrived in the shaft they were met by the water that was waist deep and still flowing in torrents. Dad's partner couldn't swim a lick but he helped him to get a hold on the pump. Father rang the bell but no answer came; no bucket was let down to them. The engineer was asleep on the job- I will explain that the engineer's job was to keep the water pumped out of the mine. The pump was run by steam as there was no electricity in those days; when the fire died out the pump stopped and the engineer slept on, even though the partner was almost exhausted, dad pulled him up the forty foot ladder to safety. Again Alex had saved his life. The workers on top only smiled when dad and his partner related how Alex had saved 6 them, but the partner thanked God for the warning.

"Father and mother were as elated over their first born as any ordinary new parents, no other child was ever so perfectly sweet. Father was making good money and sent mother on a ten days' visit with relatives to show the new offspring. Every one was well and happy. When they had been gone four or five days Alex came to my father in the mines and gave his tap, tap, on the shovel handle. His first thoughts were of mother and baby. He asked Alex if it was his wife. He tapped once, meaning no. A lump came in his throat as he knew it must be the baby. When he hesitated to ask about the baby, Alex kept knocking. Then he asked, 'Is it my baby?' Alex tapped twice. He asked if it was sick. Alex tapped once. With a weak body and trembling voice he asked if baby was dead, when the answer was two sad taps on the shovel handle. At these taps father dropped his shovel and went home and waited for a message from mother, which came stating that baby was dead. Alex was a true and faithful spiritual companion that guided the Scott family in many tragical hours.

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"When Bob's ship went down, Alex comforted the family. My brother, Bob, did service in the World War, his duty was fireman on the W.P.A. San Diego, the largest ship convoy at that time. Father was at his usual task when Alex, true to his watchfulness throughout the many years, come to warn dad about the boy. Naturally in those trying times of war when Alex kept his insistent knocking, dad's thoughts turned to Bob. As [on?] so many occasions he was 7 reluctant to ask this time if his visit concerned Bob. Finally he secured enough courage to force the words from his lips. Alex's answer was tap, tap, meaning yes. He asked, 'Is Bob dead?' and waited restlessly for the answer. Relief surged through him and tears came in his eyes as Alex gave one joyous tap, no. Father shouted, 'Bob is alive! Bob is alive,!' That was all that mattered at that time. Father came running home, telling us that Bob was alive, and found us with broken hearts, grieving over Bob's death as we had read in the Fort Worth Record where the bottom was blown out of Bob's ship on the morning of July 19, 1918. Mother's faith in Alex at that time fell to nothing as she stated, 'Alex's hind end is full of blue mud, Bob can't be alive.' Later news came that Bob was alive. All belief in Alex was strenghtened and the family lived under the guidance of Alex. The Dr. on the ship was a German spy and his communications with friends set the trap to blow the ship up fifty miles from New York, near Fire Island.

"Thus through the years, Alex warned my father of death and he passed the news on to mother, whose faith was built up enough that she prepared for the departure which came as predicted.

"Alex comes to Bob and me now but neither of us talk to him. I cannot encourage such a character as it worries me to think of him and if he revealed more I would certainly believe every tap which would cause me to live a life of unrest. Therefore, Alex is regarded as a sacred mystery that runs in the bones 8 of the Scott family. When he taps we know that something is going to happen, good or bad. We never question Alex's theurgy and receive the tragedies as God sends them." FolkTales Superstitions

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Ruby Mosley

San Angelo, Texas

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

Mrs. Eldora Scott Maples, San Angelo, Texas. Interviewed April 27, 1938- May 3, 1938.